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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Canada requests urgent meeting of Security Council "with a view to imposing economic, trade and oil sanctions against the authorities in Belgrade".

+ In separate development, the Security Council - in regular 60-day review - decides that sanctions against Iraq should be maintained.

+ Fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh region, Azerbaijan and Armenia holding substantive meetings with senior officials of both Governments, according to United Nations Spokesman.

+ Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) protests violent incident in Gaza Strip involving Israeli settlers, local school children and UNWRA international staff.

+ Margaret Joan Anstee, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Angola, in briefing at Headquarters, says United Nations Verification Mission in Angola (UNAVEM) is going as well as can be expected after 16-year civil war.

+ Secretary-General met yesterday with Foreign Minister of Morocco, in connection with moves to reactivate peace plan for Western Sahara.

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Canada has requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council "with a view to imposing economic, trade and oil sanctions against the authorities in Belgrade". In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 26 May, the Permanent Representative of Canada, Louise Frechette, expressed concern over what she called the "continuing dangerous situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other ex-republics of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia".

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Canada also asked the Council to consider steps to allow United Nations-escorted humanitarian aid convoys to reach needy civilians and to open Sarajevo airport to facilitate humanitarian activities.

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In a separate development, the Security Council has decided that sanctions against Iraq should be maintained. It held consultations this morning to consider the situation between Iraq and Kuwait and to conduct its regular 60-day review of the sanctions -- imposed against Iraq as part of the cease-fire resolution 687 (1921).

In a statement issued following the consultations, on behalf of the Council members, the President of the Security Council, Peter Hohenfellner (Austria), said: "After hearing all the opinions expressed in the course of the consultations, the President of the Council concluded that there still was no agreement that the necessary conditions existed for a modification of the regime...."

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The fact-finding mission sent by the Secretary-General to assess the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Azerbaijan and Armenia has been holding substantive meetings with senior officials of both Governments, Spokesman Francois Guiliani said today. Under discussion were the political and humanitarian aspects of the conflict, and in Baku the mission had met with a number of experts on humanitarian affairs and international relations.

The team members were expected to visit the Nagorno-Karabakh area either yesterday or today, with the understanding, said the Spokesman, that both sides would guarantee their safety.

The mission is due back in New York on Friday, 29 May.

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An attack on a Jewish settler in the central Gaza Strip today led to an attempt by a group of settlers to attack a school in the area, according to a report to the Secretary-General by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), protesting the incident.

The Secretary-General's Spokesman, quoting the report, said that an Israeli settler (a rabbi) was stabbed by a young Palestinian at a road junction. A passing motorist tried to ram the two men with his vehicle, apparently in an attempt to halt the attack. The Palestinian, who was injured, was evacuated by Israeli helicopter to a hospital in Israel. The rabbi died, though it was not clear whether his death resulted from stab wounds or the impact of the car.

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A large crowd of settlers then gathered outside an UNWRA school and threatened to attack it. They threw stones at the school, rammed a fence with a tractor and tried to break into classrooms before Israeli Defence Force soldiers eventually managed to remove them from the premises.

With the help of the security forces, the Civil Administration and UNWRA international staff, the approximately 214 children (aged between seven and 12) and their UNWRA teachers were slowly evacuated from the school, with care taken to keep them out of sight of the settlers.

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Margaret Joan Anstee, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Angola, told the press at a briefing at Headquarters today that the United Nations Verification Mission in Angola (UNIVEM) was a "difficult operation" but was going as well as could be expected. With only 124 days left before the country's first multi-purpose elections, on 29 and 30 September, she said, "we really are racing against the clock".

She said it was remarkable that, after 16 years of very violent civil war, since the peace accords were signed last year there had been no major breaches of the cease-fire. In a progress report on UNAVEM II, Mrs. Anstee said that there were humanitarian and security problems, with a massive proliferation of arms. But she expressed optimism about the success of the mission. There was clear will on both sides to go through with the peace process and people wanted to get on with the next stage of the country's development, she said.

Mrs. Anstee said that the United Nations role was limited, one of verification and observation - not organizing or supervising the elections. Donor coutries, through the United Nations Development Programme, were providing $12 million in technical assistance and the international community was also assisting in land-mine clearance. "This should be a finite operation," she said, adding that she hoped that by October UNAVEM II's role would be successfully completed.

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The Secretary-General met yesterday with the Foreign Minister of Morocco, Abdellatif Filali, who was seeking clarification on recent discussions held with the two major parties to the conflict in Western Sahara, aimed at reactivating the peace plan for the region.

The Permanent Representative of Morocco, Ahmed Anoussi, and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Western Sahara, Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan, also attended yesterday's meeting. According to a statement issued by the Secretary-General's Office, it was held in "a positive atmosphere, and served to confirm Morocco's readiness to discuss measures that might be adopted in order to facilitate the implementation of the plan which calls for the holding of a referendum in Western Sahara under United Nations auspices".

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It was agreed that the Secretary-General's Special Representative would "immediately pursue talks with each of the parties". Talks would be held initially in New York, where they were expected to continue over the next few weeks.

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